

Reality Check *Plus* Planned for Four Maryland Regions, Statewide: How Will Maryland Grow Over the Next 25 Years?

Maryland, already the fifth most densely populated state in the nation, is rapidly becoming more crowded. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that Maryland's population will grow by 1.5 million people and 500,000 jobs by 2030 – just 24 years from now.

Where will all the 1.5 million new residents live and work? How do we accommodate these new residents and jobs in ways that will expand our economy but protect our environment?

These critical questions and others will be explored as part of a series of four regional events known as **Reality Check *Plus*** that will take place across Maryland during May/June 2006. The dates are:

- May 25, 2006 -- **Eastern Shore Regional Reality Check**
- June 2, 2006 – **Western MD Regional Reality Check**
- June 9, 2006 – **Central MD Regional Reality Check**
- June 15, 2006 – **Southern MD Regional Reality Check**

Reality Check *Plus* is a unique program designed to foster collective visioning about regional growth. Sponsored by ULI-Baltimore, the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, and 1000 Friends of Maryland, **Reality Check *Plus*** will bring together a diverse group of organizations and various stakeholders, including politicians, developers, environmentalists, and business and civic leaders at four, regional growth visioning exercises.

In addition, a broad-based coalition of more than 100 organizations is guiding this effort, including the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, the Home Builders Association of Maryland, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, St. Mary's College, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Maryland chapter of the American Planning Association, the Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, the Greater Baltimore Committee, Westside Renaissance, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and the Interfaith Housing Alliance, among many others.

The four **Reality Check *Plus*** regional exercises will take place on the Eastern Shore and in Southern Maryland, Western Maryland and the Baltimore-Washington Corridor. The results from each regional event will provide the basis for a statewide vision for growth, and a subsequent report will identify specific steps for implementation of that vision on both the state and local levels.

A number of other jurisdictions around the country have already launched local or regional visioning exercises – Envision Utah in the Salt Lake City region; Blueprint in Sacramento, California; and Reality Check in Los Angeles, in Washington, D.C., and, most recently, in Fredericksburg, Virginia. What distinguishes **Reality Check *Plus*** from previous visioning exercises in Maryland is that it is privately led, statewide and action-oriented.

The participation of individuals and organizations with differing voices and perspectives are essential to the success of **Reality Check *Plus***. Among the many ways you or your organization can become involved in this important initiative include:

- Becoming a table facilitator for one of the four regional exercises
- Asking about other volunteer opportunities
- Becoming a sponsor – financial or otherwise
- Post-exercise, getting involved in the implementation phase

To become involved or to find out more about **Reality Check *Plus***, visit our website at www.realitycheckmaryland.org.

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